

STARS AND STRIPES

Monday, April 7, 2003

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

U.S. forces seize presidential palace

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER
AND HAMZA HENDAWI

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. forces thundered deep into Baghdad on Monday, the third straight day that American troops entered the city. In the south, British troops thrust to the center of Basra, "delivering liberation" to Iraq's second largest city, a British commander said.

The coalition advance on both fronts "reinforces the reality that the regime is not in control of all of the major cities," said Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command in Qatar.

With machine-gun fire providing cover, U.S. Marines grabbed planks, poles and twisted rails as they surged into Baghdad on Monday across a shattered bridge over a Tigris River tributary.

The assault opened the way for thousands of Marines to move in from the southeast while the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division marched in from the southwest.

U.S. Army Col. David Perkins said the American military does not keep a body count but estimated his forces had killed 600 to 1,000 Iraqi fighters in Baghdad on Monday.

"There is too much needless loss of life. We have had a lot of suicide attackers today. These guys are going to die in droves," he said. "The bridge is stacked up with them. They keep trying to ram the tanks with car bombs."

Iraqi officials remained defiant. "Be assured Baghdad is safe, secure and great," Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf said at a dust-blown news conference on the roof of the Palestine Hotel. "There is no presence of American infidels in the city of Baghdad, at all."

Iraqi television and radio broadcast patriotic songs and slogans as well as footage of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein meeting with his son Qusai and top officials. The footage was not accompanied by sound.

With Baghdad echoing with intermittent explosions Monday night, armed militiamen and troops manned barricades close to the Al-Rashid Hotel and the presidential "Old Palace" compound. Most of the city was deserted and remained without electricity.

Two bodies were recovered from three adjoining houses that were destroyed Monday, but the toll may be as high as 14, rescue workers said.

At least 75 wounded civilians were brought to al-Kindi hospital in Baghdad's working-class district of al-Nahda, a hospital official said. Most suffered from gun shot wounds, burns and shrapnel.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said Monday that overwhelmed hospitals in Baghdad are short of drugs, anesthetics and water.

In other Arab countries, people expressed dismay and disbelief over television images of U.S. tanks in the heart of Baghdad, speaking to reporters with The Associated Press. Some dismissed the news as American propaganda



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, ANDREW CUTRARO/KRT

A Marine from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines enters the presidential palace at Salman Pak, Iraq, on Sunday. The Marines took the area the night before.

while others volunteered to fight for Iraq.

Russia's ambassador to Iraq, Vladimir Titorenko, on Monday accused American forces of having fired on his convoy of Russian diplomats and journalists heading toward Syria the day before.

"The Americans opened fire on a Russian diplomatic car and on the car of the Russian ambassador, which very clearly had the Russian flag on it," Titorenko said.

A senior U.S. diplomat said it was still unclear who was responsible for the incident, which Russian officials said wounded at least four people.

In the south, British "Desert Rats" swept through the heart of Basra and took possession of Iraq's second-largest city, greeted by huge crowds of welcoming residents but also scenes of chaotic looting. At least three British soldiers were killed.

Air Marshal Brian Burridge, commander of British forces in the Gulf, called the advance "historic."

"After decades under the heel of Saddam's brutal regime, U.K. forces are in the process of delivering liberation to the people of Basra," Burridge said.

British officials also said Monday they found the body of Ali Hassan al-Majid, the Iraqi general known as "Chemical Ali" for ordering a poison gas attack that killed thousands of Kurds in 1988. Officials said al-Majid apparently was killed Saturday in a coalition airstrike on his villa in Basra.

In Hindiyyah, the U.S. military is testing samples from a site in Iraq where soldiers found metal drums containing possible chemical weapons, defense officials said Monday.

Al-Sahhaf, Iraq's information minis-

ter, denied that al-Majid had been killed, according to Al-Jazeera television.

In northern Iraq, U.S. soldiers and Kurdish fighters took the town of Dibagah, near the site of a U.S. friendly fire incident that killed 17 Kurdish fighters and a translator on Sunday. But nearby, a strategic crossroads between the key cities of Mosul and Kirkuk remained a no-man's land.

At Khazer, due east of Mosul, Iraqis held a position west of a strategic bridge they lost to the Kurds last week, and the Kurds pulled back east of the bridge to clear the way for air strikes. On Monday the number of air strikes diminished somewhat.

In Baghdad, U.S. Marine tanks and amphibious assault vehicles lined up at two bridges, waiting to enter Baghdad on heavy military rafts or makeshift bridges.

On Monday night, Marines searched buildings in southeastern Baghdad. Cobra helicopters shot machine-gun rounds into one area in the distance that exploded into flames. The intensely hot air was filled with smoke from widespread fires.

U.S. attacks on the northwest side of Baghdad had prevented reinforcement of Iraqi fighters in the city, Brooks said at a Central Command briefing Monday.

"The regime does still have some capability," he said. "What we're not seeing is an overarching structure of control."

Two U.S. Marines were killed and two wounded Monday. Six American soldiers were reported missing. The U.S. death toll is up to 85.

Taliban hunted after attacks

BY AMIR SHAH

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Security forces swept through remote hills in northwestern Afghanistan on Monday in search of several hundred suspected Taliban fighters blamed for launching a recent wave of attacks.

The fighters' names and native villages were discovered on lists found in the pockets of five senior Taliban commanders captured during fighting in Badghis province last week, said Abdul Wahed Tawaqli, spokesman for the governor of neighboring Herat province.

Those captured included Mullah Badar, a former governor of Badghis under the Taliban, whose government was ousted by U.S. forces and Afghan opposition groups in 2001.

The latest troubles in Badghis began April 1 when up to 500 suspected Taliban fighters launched attacks on Akazia and Sipia villages, about 50 miles east of the provincial capital, Qalai-e-Naw.

Tawaqli said 150 Taliban were killed in a day of battles, 50 were captured and 300 others fled into the mountains.

Eleven soldiers loyal to the province's governor were killed and seven were wounded in the fighting with rocket launchers, grenades and automatic weapons, he said.

Tawaqli said authorities had intelligence the attacks were coming, and Herat Gov. Ismail Khan sent 300 troops to Badghis to help security forces fend off the assaults and hunt down the culprits.

The 50 alleged Taliban captured during the fighting were transferred to Herat, Tawaqli said.

"In the pockets of these senior commanders, we found lists detailing the names and native villages of those who've been attacking us," Tawaqli said. "We've been looking for them house by house, one by one."

Tawaqli said several suspected Taliban had already been arrested in Tuesday's sweep.

Afghan authorities say Taliban remnants are reorganizing in an effort to destabilize the fledgling government of President Hamid Karzai.

Southern Afghanistan in particular has been wracked by several attacks in the last few weeks by suspected Taliban fighters, including the murder of a Red Cross worker Ricardo Munguia and an ambush on a U.S. military convoy that killed two American servicemen.

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Latest developments

■ U.S. troops stormed into the heart of Baghdad, seizing Saddam Hussein's New Presidential Palace on the Tigris River in a brazen daylight raid. U.S. tanks also briefly surrounded the Information Ministry and the landmark Al-Rashid Hotel.

■ Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf denied his city had been stormed. "There is no presence of American infidels in the city of Baghdad, at all," he said.

■ A statement on Iraqi state television in Saddam's name urged soldiers who had been separated from regular units to join up with any unit they could find.

■ U.S. war commander, Army Gen. Tommy R. Franks, visited troops inside Iraq, including soldiers in the holy Shiite city of Najaf, a sign of growing confidence.

■ U.S. forces fended off attacks by Iraqi fighters roaming the edges of Baghdad's airport in a seven-hour battle that ended early Monday with an estimated 150 Iraqis killed and no U.S. casualties.

■ U.S. tank commanders were warning their troops that Iraqis in civilian vehicles could ram their tanks in potential suicide attacks and ordered them to destroy any suspicious vehicles approaching.

■ Ali Hassan al-Majid, "Chemical Ali," one of the most brutal members of President Saddam Hussein's inner circle, was apparently killed by an airstrike on his house in Basra, British officials said.

■ Civilians went on a looting rampage in Basra, hauling furniture and carpets out of the state bank and a western hotel as British troops took control of Iraq's second largest city.

■ Arabs throughout the Mideast were dismayed by television images of American tanks rolling through the heart of Baghdad and some rushed to sign up for holy war against U.S.-led forces.

■ A group of armored personnel carriers in southern Baghdad was hit by rockets. Six U.S. soldiers are missing and others are wounded, U.S. field reports said.

■ Four or five Marines were killed when their vehicle was struck by an artillery shell at a canal near the southern outskirts of Baghdad, military officials said.

■ Gen. Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Republican Guard's main weapons systems are gone and the force probably cannot assemble more than 1,000 men in any one place.

From The Associated Press

Soldier charged in grenade attack on 101st

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — A U.S. soldier could face the death penalty after being charged with murder for allegedly tossing grenades into his comrades' tents in Kuwait last month.

Two officers were killed in the attack, and 14 soldiers were wounded in the March 23 attack at Camp Pennsylvania.

Sgt. Hasan K. Akbar, 32, was charged two days after the attacks. Fort Campbell, home of the 101st Airborne Division, announced the charges Friday.

Akbar is the only person charged in the attack at the command center of the 101st Division's 1st Brigade.

Akbar is being held at an undisclosed U.S. military facility.

Dennis Olgin, a retired judge advocate general's corps officer, said the charges carry the death penalty. A commander overseeing the case will decide what penalty to seek, Olgin said.

Akbar, an American Muslim, told family members he was wary of going to war in Iraq. His mother, Quran Bilal, said she was concerned he might have been accused because he is a Muslim.

Akbar was charged under military law with two counts of premeditated murder and 17 counts of attempted murder. Akbar was also charged with aggravated arson of an inhabited dwelling and misbehavior as a sentinel while receiving special pay.

Olgin said the 17 attempted murder charges likely include other soldiers in the tents who were not injured.

Killed in the attack were Army Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, of Easton, Pa., and Air Force Maj. Gregory Stone, 40, of Boise, Idaho.

Akbar, of the 101st's 326th Engineer Battalion, was taken into custody shortly after the explosions, and a military magistrate found probable cause that he committed the attack. An earlier statement from Fort Campbell said three grenades were thrown or rolled through the front door of three tents.

Akbar's case has been forwarded to the commander of his unit who has authority to direct an investigation under Article 32 of military law, the post said.

From wire reports

Roundup

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Two Polish reporters were abducted by armed Iraqis at a checkpoint in central Iraq on Monday afternoon, their editors said.

U.S. war commander Gen. Tommy Franks visited troops inside Iraq, including soldiers in the holy Shiite city of Najaf and two other sites, officials said.

President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair began to focus on postwar rebuilding in Iraq at a meeting Monday in Belfast, Northern Ireland. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said: "The hostilities phase is coming to a conclusion."

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Monday that while Saddam's whereabouts may not be known, "we do know he no longer runs much of Iraq."

"The circle is closing, their options are running out," Rumsfeld said of Saddam and his top lieutenants.

News tracker: What's new with old news

States

Cross burning ban: The Supreme Court upheld a state ban on cross burning, ruling Monday the history of racial intimidation attached to it outweighs the free speech protection of Ku Klux Klansmen or others who might use it.

A burning cross is a particularly powerful instrument of terror, and government should have the power to stamp out or punish its use as a weapon of intimidation, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote.

The protections afforded by the First Amendment "are not absolute," she wrote.

The court voted 6-3 to uphold the ban, but was more narrowly split on the question of whether the law violates the constitutional guarantee of free speech. Justice Clarence Thomas joined the majority on the broader opinion but dissented in the 5-4 ruling that the law does not violate the constitutional guarantee of free speech.

Thomas, the court's only black member, agreed cross burning is abhorrent but said the court didn't even have to consider the First Amendment implications because a state has a right to bar conduct it considers "particularly vicious."

At issue was a 50-year-old Virginia law that makes it a crime to burn a cross as an act of intimidation. A lower court ruled the law muzzled free speech.

Early spring snowstorm: A huge snowstorm took a bite out of spring on Monday from the Plains to the East Coast, burying emerging flower buds, canceling baseball home openers and snarling the morning rush hour.

Up to a foot of wet, heavy snow had buried parts of Nebraska and southern Minnesota, and a foot was possible in the highlands of Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains and northern New Jersey.

Farther south, where the precipitation was in the form of rain, at least six people were injured in Mississippi, which had flooding and damage caused by a possible tornado. Six people with storm-related injuries were treated Sunday night at a hospital in Brookhaven, Miss.

Central Park jogger: The woman who gained anonymous fame 14 years ago as the Central Park jogger says she remembers nothing of the night she was raped and nearly beaten to death.

"I have no memory of the horror of that night, of the violence of the beating, of the feeling of helplessness, of powerlessness," Trisha Meili, 42, told NBC's Katie Couric in her first television interview.

Five teenagers were convicted for the assault and served prison sentences ranging from 6 years and 8 months to 13 years.

Their convictions were thrown out in December after Matias Reyes, 31, an imprisoned murderer claimed that he alone had attacked the jogger. A DNA test confirmed that he was involved.

U.S. prison population: The number of people in U.S. prisons and jails last year topped 2 million for the first time, driven by get-tough sentencing policies that mandate long terms for drug offenders and other criminals, the government reported Sunday.

The federal government accounted for more inmates than any state, with almost 162,000, according to a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the Justice Department.

California, Texas, Florida and New York were the four biggest state prison systems, mirroring their status as the most populous states.

World

Ivory Coast fighting: Government and rebel forces battled in the Ivory Coast's western borderlands on Monday, days after insurgents' first participation in a unity government meant to end the west African nation's civil war.

Some 60 civilians died in recent days when government helicopter-gunships attacked the insurgent-held town of Bin-Houye, near Ivory Coast's border with war-riven Liberia, a rebel leader, Felix Doh, said by satellite telephone.

Government spokesman N'Goran Aka said no civilians had died in the fighting, which Aka said continued Monday after rebels advanced Saturday against loyalist positions.

Rebels "are all dressed in civilian clothes ... So when their soldiers are killed, they claim we killed civilians," Aka said. "It's not true. [Any dead] were combatants."

Virgin Island death: A British court on Monday overturned the murder conviction of one American man and upheld the acquittal of another in the 2000 killing of a woman in the British Virgin Islands.

The five British judges ruled that the evidence of a key prosecution witness, a prison informant, was too unreliable to have convicted William Labrador, of Southampton, N.Y. Labrador was serving a life sentence in the killing of Lois McMillen, a 34-year-old artist from Middlebury, Conn.

The judges also ruled that Alexander Benedetto, a 37-year-old New York publisher, was properly acquitted. That decision overturned an order by the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal to retry Benedetto.

Labrador, 39, and Benedetto were among four Americans charged in McMillen's slaying. She was vacationing on the island of Tortola when she drowned in January 2000.

Labrador was convicted largely on the testimony of Jeffrey Plante, 61, who said Labrador confessed to the killing while the two men shared a jail cell on Tortola.

Philippines bombing probe: Australian forensic experts will help investigate a deadly bombing that killed 16 people and injured 55 others in the southern Philippines, officials said Sunday. U.S. investigators also have offered to help.

No one has claimed responsibility for last week's attack in Davao city. Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said Muslim guerrillas may have been involved.

Serbia assassination arrests: Two former leaders of Slobodan Milosevic's dreaded secret service arrested in connection with the assassination of Serbia's prime minister could be handed over to the U.N. war crimes tribunal, a Belgrade official said Sunday.

Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic told Studio B television that Serbia is prepared to extradite the two.

The men — former state security chief, Jovica Stanisic, and his deputy, Franko Simatovic, who headed notorious Serb paramilitary units in the Bosnian and Croatian wars — were arrested after the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in Belgrade last month.

War on terrorism

Afghan health care: Complaining his country's health care system was "decades" behind the rest of the world, President Hamid Karzai on Monday urged young Afghans to study medicine and nursing.

Karzai said average life expectancy for men and women in this war-shattered nation was 45 years, compared with more than 75 years in Europe.

"Afghanistan will never get rid of this disaster unless as a nation we ... try our best to educate professionals," Karzai said in a speech to mark the U.N.'s world health day.

"We also have to develop our hospitals and clinics, not just in the big cities, but all over the country."

Karzai said Afghanistan must eventually end its dependency on foreign aid and step up health care training.

Potassium iodide pills: Households, schools and child-care centers near nuclear power plants should keep potassium iodide pills on hand to protect children from an accidental or intentional radiation release, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends.

The pills protect people from getting thyroid cancer.

The policy is aimed at families, schools and child-care centers within 10 miles of nuclear plants. Schools and child-care facilities within that distance should stockpile the pills and develop plans for how to distribute them in the event of a disaster, the academy said.

March for ribbons: Unhappy with the mayor's policy banning yellow ribbons on municipal property, Fieldsboro, N.J., rallied marched through town Saturday, tacking the offending emblems on everything from the front door of the town hall to the mayor's car.

The crowd whooped and cheered when Guardian Angels founder Curtis Siwa bearded the hood ornament of the mayor's Lincoln with a big yellow bow.

All the while, Mayor Edward "Buddy" Tyler was upstairs in his second-floor office. He has been harshly criticized for ordering yellow ribbons taken down from public property in the town he has presided over for most of the past 22 years.

From wire services

News from around the war

U.S. tests suspicious material

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is testing samples from a site in Iraq where soldiers found possible chemical weapons, defense officials said Monday.

Testing at laboratories in the United States has to be completed before the presence of chemical weapons could be confirmed, the officials said.

Soldiers from the Army's 101st Airborne Division found the suspicious material in a compound near the Iraqi city of Hindiyah, about 60 miles south of Baghdad.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged reports about the site Monday but said first reports are often incorrect.

"We have to take our time and look at it," Rumsfeld said, adding that getting samples back to the United States and completing testing can take days.

A Knight Ridder News Service journalist traveling with the unit said initial tests of samples from the facility were inconsistent.

Some tests did not indicate chemical weapons, while others indicated the presence of G-class nerve agents — which include sarin and tabun — and mustard agent, a blistering chemical first used in World War I.

The Knight Ridder reporter, Tom Lasseter, also reported that he and several soldiers were decontaminated after some of the soldiers felt ill while searching the compound. Officials at the Pentagon said they did not have any information about anyone getting sick.

If the discovery was confirmed, it would be the first find of chemical weapons during the war.

Elusive Saddam more stealthy

CAIRO, Egypt — In peacetime, Saddam Hussein's whereabouts are top secret.

In war, with the U.S. military after his head, it's even harder to keep track of him.

The Iraqi president — or possibly a double — has been seen on state-owned television giving speeches, chairing meetings of top lieutenants and on one occasion greeting well-wishers on a Baghdad street. But according to the few sources in a position to know, he's likely spending most of his time underground.

Since the outset of the war, when cruise missiles hit a compound in Baghdad where Saddam was believed to be hiding, U.S. and British officials have questioned whether he is alive.

An Iraqi dissident who for years worked very close to Saddam said the Iraqi leader is so obsessed with his security that very few people would know about his movements.

The exiled dissident said only two people are kept posted on Saddam's whereabouts — his younger son, Qusai, who commands the Republican Guard and is head of the president's security, and his private secretary, Abed Hameed Hmoud, a member of Saddam's Tikriti clan. Even older son Odai is thought to be out of the loop because he is considered to have a reckless nature.

The dissident spoke on condition his name and the European capital where he lives were not disclosed.

During the 1991 Gulf War, the dissident said, Saddam stayed at private houses in several Baghdad neighborhoods, dressed in a long robe and traditional checked headdress. He would move around in old taxis or trucks, and used couriers to communicate with aides, the informant said.

Saddam reportedly uses doubles to keep people guessing about his movements.

U.S. preparing war-crimes case

ARLINGTON, Va. — Even as U.S. troops continue to battle for Baghdad, they are collecting evidence so U.S. military lawyers might prosecute Iraqi leaders for war crimes, officials said.

"It's not necessary to wait until the end of hostilities to want to begin looking for evidence of war crimes," Pierre-Richard Prosper, U.S. ambassador for war crime issues, told reporters Monday.

Elements of the Iraqi leadership "practice widespread and systematic violations of the law," Prosper said.

The U.S. government is mounting a criminal case against the top leadership, including Saddam Hussein and his sons, he said.

The regime appears to have committed at least three war crimes for which U.S. officials plan to ensure they're brought to justice, said W. Hays Parks, special assistant to the Judge Advocate General for the Army.

The regime, Parks said, violated laws of the Geneva Conventions when they filmed and aired on state television interviews with five U.S. prisoners of war, members of the 507th Maintenance Company captured during an ambush March 23 when their convoy took a wrong turn in southern Iraq.

The film also shows evidence that some of the POWs, other members of the 507th, were executed, Parks said.

And Iraqi military members, particularly those of the Fedayeen militia, violated laws by dressing as civilians and using white flags to fake surrender and then attack coalition forces.

U.S. military officials will begin this week holding Article 5 hearings to determine the legal status of the more than 7,000 enemy prisoners of war in coalition custody now, officials said.

The two also said U.S. personnel have not violated any laws by allowing journalists embedded with the troops to film the captured or surrender of Iraqi troops. The filming at the time is a "statement of fact," Parks said.

And U.S. Special Forces aren't violating laws when they are clad in civilian clothes for special missions, Parks said.

"Ninety-nine point nine-nine percent of the time, our forces are going to be in full uniform," he said. In the "rare cases," when troops mix with the indigenous population or fighters, they mark themselves with some form of identifiers, be it a hat, scarf, arm band or even an American flag sewn somewhere on their clothing, Parks said.

"And they always carry their arms openly," he said.

In the early conflicts in Afghanistan, Special Forces soldiers wore civilian clothing and long hair and beards to blend in order to blend in with the population.

British forces finally control Basra

BASRA, Iraq — British troops on Monday swept through the heart of Basra to take possession of Iraq's second largest city, greeted by huge crowds of welcoming residents but also scenes of chaotic looting.

Hundreds of people poured out along the main road of the city to watch British soldiers from the 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment secure the center of the city on foot patrol.

"Saddam destroyed everything. He destroyed the water, he destroyed the people. The people of Basra are very happy today," said one man who refused to give his name, giving a thumbs-up to a passing soldier.

Groups of smiling women in black chadors hovered in the background, as British troops joked with the men and let some boys look through their sights.

"It's been a surprise to me," Lance Cpl. Mark Kibberd said. "We were expecting quite a bit of resistance this far in."

British troops had held off from storming the city of 1.3 million people earlier to avoid civilian casualties in what they feared would become bloody urban fighting against pro-Saddam militia and paramilitaries.

Rumsfeld: Saddam not in control now

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Monday that while Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's whereabouts may not be known, "we do know he no longer runs much of Iraq."

"The circle is closing, their options are running out," Rumsfeld said of Saddam and his top lieutenants.

Looking beyond Saddam, Rumsfeld said that planning is under way to turn over to Iraqis control of several government ministries other than defense and intelligence.

"It's pretty well sorted through," Rumsfeld told a Pentagon briefing.

U.S. officials envision turning over administration of Iraq to an interim Iraqi government at some point, leading to eventual elections.

Rumsfeld insisted that the United States did not intend to indefinitely administer Iraq, and that the plan was to turn government over to an Iraqi-run interim government as soon as practical.

"The United States is not going to impose a government on Iraq," Rumsfeld said.

Planes bomb Iraqi positions in north

SULAYMANIYAH, Iraq — Coalition warplanes struck Iraqi positions in northern Iraq on Monday and pounded Baghdad-controlled military targets on southern routes toward the capital, officials and witnesses said.

U.S. soldiers and Kurdish fighters took the town of Dibagah, near the site of a U.S. friendly fire incident that killed 17 Kurdish fighters and a translator, on Sunday. But nearby, a strategic crossroads between the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk remained a no man's land.

Iraqi soldiers held higher positions above the crossroads and the Kurds were holding back as U.S. planes hit Iraqi positions Monday.

At Khazir, due east of Mosul, Iraqis held a position west of a strategic bridge they lost to the Kurds last week, and the Kurds pulled back east of the bridge to clear the way for airstrikes. On Monday, the number of air strikes had diminished somewhat.

Witnesses in the frontline town of Chamchamal, 20 miles east of Kirkuk, reported explosions Sunday night in the oil-rich city.

Kurdish peshmerga, or guerrilla fighters, based in Chamchamal were sending "expeditionary" military convoys into stretches of land recently abandoned by Iraqi troops who have retreated back toward Kirkuk, said Omar bin Abdul Aziz, a reporter for the independent newspaper Hawlati.

South of the Kurdish autonomous region, Kurdish military commander Mola Bakhtiyar said coalition airplanes and missiles struck Iraqi frontline positions guarding routes to Baghdad, as well as military garrisons in the oil-rich Khanaqin area, including Marwari, Sadi and Jelowla.

Bush, Blair to discuss rebuilding

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair began to focus on postwar rebuilding in Iraq on Monday, as Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "The hostilities phase is coming to a conclusion."

Powell looked beyond the fighting and said, "It is time for all of us to think about the post-hostility stage — how we create a representative government consisting of all elements of Iraqi society."

The reconstruction question has divided the president's advisers and the United States and Britain. Blair wants deeper U.N. involvement in postwar Iraq than Bush, who seeks a transitional governing authority consisting of Iraqi exiles and people living in the country now. Powell played down the differences, saying, "There isn't as much debate and disagreement as you might read in the newspapers."

The secretary said that the United States is sending a team to Iraq this week to begin laying the groundwork for an interim authority. He said the United Nations can provide humanitarian aid and add legitimacy to the interim authority, but he did not describe a role for the U.N. beyond that. Powell made clear that the U.S.-British coalition should play the leading role.

"The coalition, having taken the political risk and having paid the cost in lives, must have a leading role," Powell said. Powell, one-time chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it was impossible to predict how long the war would last.

Annan on U.N.'s role in postwar Iraq

UNITED NATIONS — Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Monday he asked to meet with the U.N. Security Council to discuss the reconstruction of postwar Iraq, stressing he expects the United Nations to have "an important role."

The U.N.'s role after the war has become a major issue, with the Bush administration insisting the U.S.-led coalition fighting in Iraq take the lead in reconstruction. The European Union and Washington's closest ally, Britain, are pushing for greater U.N. involvement.

Annan said only the United Nations can bring international legitimacy to the process of rebuilding Iraq.

"I do expect the U.N. to play an important role," he said. "Above all, the U.N. involvement does bring legitimacy which is necessary — necessary for the country, for the region, and for the peoples of the world."

DOD: War's crash rate not unusual

ARLINGTON, Va. — A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter is lost, six known dead. An AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter crashes in central Iraq, killing two of the Marine pilots. A CH-46 Sea Knight Marine Corps helicopter crashes; 12 are dead.

Taken individually, in a vacuum, the news of aviation safety coming out of Operation Iraqi Freedom might not look so good. But that would be a bad assumption, military aviation experts said.

"In no uncertain terms are the rates we're experiencing for all types of airframes out of the ordinary," said Lt. Col. Benjamin Moody, the executive assistant for the Marine Corps' safety division.

"We don't want to lose any airframe during an average year, but [the flight hours] coupled with the stressful environment in which they are operating in Iraq and Kuwait — this is not necessarily surprising nor particularly alarming," he said.

"It is very much to the credit of the pilots and their training and skills that they are not doing more damage to the aircraft than they are."

With more than 25,000 sorties flown since the war to topple the Iraqi regime began — roughly 2,000 a day — an overall accident rate of aircraft, manned and unmanned, is roughly 0.05 percent, or less than one in every 1,900 sorties, said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brian Urban, a spokesman at the Coalition Forces Air Component Command in Saudi Arabia. The figure does not include air missions from aircraft attached to land-based or special operations forces, he said.

"We're doing fantastic," said Marine Col. David Kerrick, deputy commander of Naval Safety Center in Norfolk, Va.

The crash rate for the Navy stands at 2.26 per 100,000 flight hours, and at 3.48 per 100,000 for the Marine Corps, Kerrick said. Last year, the rate for the two services combined was 2.28 per 100,000.

From wire and staff reports

'Chemical Ali' may be dead

BASRA, Iraq — Ali Hassan al-Majid, one of the most brutal members of President Saddam Hussein's inner circle, was apparently killed by an airstrike on his house in Basra, British officials said Monday. He had been dubbed "Chemical Ali" by opponents for ordering a 1988 poison gas attack that killed thousands of Kurds.

British Maj. Andrew Jackson of the 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment told The Associated Press that his superiors had reported the death of the man who was Saddam's first cousin, entrusted with defending southern Iraq against invading coalition forces.

Al-Majid apparently was killed Saturday when two coalition aircraft used laser-guided munitions to attack his house in Basra.

Jackson said a body thought to be his was found along with that of his bodyguard and the head of Iraqi intelligence services in Basra.

Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf denied al-Majid was killed, the Arabic-language station Al-Jazeera said.

Thwarted al-Qaida attacks

WASHINGTON — When al-Qaida leaders decided an attack on a U.S. military shuttle bus was not spectacular enough, the Singapore-based operatives who proposed the idea meticulously planned to hit more daring targets.

They laid out plans to blow up embassies of the United States and three other nations and had a chemist buy four tons of ammonium nitrate — four times the amount of explosive that Timothy McVeigh used to bomb the Oklahoma City federal building.

In chilling detail, Philippine intelligence reports obtained by The Associated Press also revealed plans to attack U.S. corporations and warships in Singapore and crash a hijacked plane at the country's international airport.

The embassy attacks were foiled by U.S. investigators and allies in Southeast Asia as they entered the final stages — a mostly untold success during the war on terrorism.

The success was tempered by the discovery that the explosives were not recovered.

"Singapore, for one, is a perfect target for attacks as some 17,000 Americans are residing in the city-state and about 6,000 multinational companies, several of which are American, are among its biggest employers," one of the two Philippine reports said.

The terrorists belonged to Jemaah Islamiyah, designated by the U.S. government as a terrorist organization and described in one of the Philippine reports as "part of the broader al-Qaida syndicate."

The group, which planned Singaporean attacks before and after the hijackings in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, is believed responsible for attacks throughout Southeast Asia. The group is suspected in the blasts that killed nearly 200 people on the Indonesian resort of Bali last October.

The attacks in Singapore were prevented after 15 individuals were arrested in December 2001, although two of them were released.

One of the Philippine reports said, "Local officials and Western business executives were taken aback by the ability of al-Qaida to plant operatives in ... one of the most tightly controlled societies."

Members of four- or five-man cells led normal lives, avoided contact with well-known Islamic organizations and were not even known to be active members of mosques in Singapore.

They used code names and code numbers, communicated by Internet e-mail, encrypted their computer diskettes and used prepaid mobile phone cards to avoid detection.

After the U.S. military campaign began in Afghanistan, members of Jemaah Islamiyah planned to procure 21 tons of explosive materials — and bought the four tons of ammonium nitrate — in an operation to attack embassies of the United States, Britain, Israel and Australia, the Philippine investigators said.

From wire reports

U.S. forces storm into Baghdad

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. forces thundered into the heart of Baghdad on Monday, storming a presidential palace and briefly placing tanks outside the Information Ministry, a message to President Saddam Hussein's faltering regime that coalition forces could enter the Iraqi capital at will.

U.S. tanks briefly surrounded Al-Rashid Hotel, where Iraqi snipers fired on U.S. soldiers. U.S. tanks returned fire with their main guns and .50-caliber machine guns.

Late Monday, the city continued to be rocked by explosions from areas on the west bank of the Tigris. Most of the city was without power or water and city streets were nearly deserted after nightfall.

U.S. Army Col. David Perkins, a brigade commander, estimated between 600 and 1,000 Iraqi fighters had been killed in fighting Monday.

"We can basically go wherever we want, whenever we want, even if Saddam is still alive. He has become irrelevant," Perkins said.

Tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and hundreds of soldiers with the Army's 3rd Infantry Division made the lightning thrust into the city, with tank-killing A-10 planes and pilotless drones flying overhead.

At the city's southern edge, Iraqi soldiers battled Marines and Army troops in bloody fighting.

Two Marines were killed and two wounded when their armored troop carrier was hit by an artillery shell at a bridge spanning a canal.

The Marines advanced into the capital by foot after the Iraqis blew apart the bridge.

Also, a group of U.S. armored personnel carriers in southern Baghdad was hit by rockets, according to field reports. Six American soldiers were reported missing and a large number were wounded.

At Baghdad's international airport, southwest of the city's center, more than 110 Iraqis in military uniform were killed in fighting that extended overnight into Monday.

An official at the al-Kindi hospital said at least 75 wounded civilians had been brought in since morning, most suffering from gunshot wounds, burns and shrapnel.

Three adjoining houses at the upscale al-Mansour district were destroyed Monday afternoon in what neighbors said was an allied missile attack. All that was left of the houses was a heap of concrete, mangled iron rods, ruined furniture and clothes.

Navy Lt. Mark Kitchens, a U.S. Central Command spokesman, said the Baghdad raid Monday was a "different kind

of mission" than Saturday's drive through the city.

"It proceeded on a much slower pace and did a lot more activity than we did in our previous entry," he said.

Asked if troops might stay in Baghdad, he said, "I think that would be a possibility."

In the heart of Baghdad, U.S. soldiers who reached the gold-and-blue-domed New Presidential Palace used the toilets, rifled through documents in the bombed-out compound, and looted ashtrays, pillows, gold-painted Arab glassware and other items. The Americans also blew up a statue of Saddam on horseback in the center of the city.

"I do believe this city is freakin' ours," boasted Capt. Chris Carter.

The troops secured the main roads in the area, leaving soldiers at every intersection. They made forays to the Al-Rashid and to the bombed-out Information Ministry, but unlike the palace, they did not stay to occupy them.

Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf declared, "I reassure you Baghdad is safe."

"They are beginning to commit suicide at the walls of Baghdad," al-Sahhaf told reporters in a hastily called news conference outside the Palestine Hotel, where many foreign journalists are staying. "There is no presence of the American columns in the city of Baghdad, none at all."

Acts of humanity still present in times of war

The Associated Press

Amid the death and destruction of cannon, tank and machine gun fire, humanity doesn't just vanish in the dust of war.

Through the despair and darkness, there are glimmers of compassion, kindness and hope that emerge, even crossing over battle lines.

An American nurse mends the wounds of Iraqi soldiers aboard a U.S. hospital ship after overcoming her distrust. "Then you see the pain and the agony of the people, and that whole mind-set is erased," said Kimberlee Flannery, 23, of Chillicothe, Ohio.

Or flash back almost 140 years. A Confederate sergeant in the Civil War dodges bullets from Union soldiers while crossing over a wall with canteens full of water to give to the North's own wounded.

In World War I, German and British soldiers emerge from their respective trenches, a truce spreading up and down the line as they belt out carols on Christmas Eve 1914. The soldiers talk, trade food, organize soccer games and help each other bury the dead of both sides.

In the life-degrading enterprise of war, there are acts that say even one life matters. Putting a unit at risk to rescue one POW or going into fire to retrieve a comrade who is already dead is the military's way of showing that each life has value.

And these acts of humanity extend to the other side. The UNS Comfort hospital ship is treating injured Iraqi combatants. An Iraqi lawyer led American rescuers to POW Jessica Lynch. And on the road to Baghdad, a huge Army convoy took a detour when Iraqi farmers asked that U.S. soldiers avoid driving through a field.

"In the midst of the madness, violence and destruction, we try to find ways to stick some humanity back into things," says Daniel Kuehl, professor of strategy and airpower history at the National Defense University.

Bold acts of kindness to preserve human life and dignity have extended beyond battle lines in almost every war.

Civil War soldiers from North and South were so hungry for news that they would call a timeout to exchange newspapers. They also took impromptu breaks in fighting to swap northern coffee for southern tobacco.

"The ultimate means of warfare is hurting people and breaking things, violence," says Kuehl, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel. "And yet you will find over and over again soldiers in the midst of doing things that seem entirely out of context."

When aiding a comrade, the phrase used by military — "brothers in arms" — isn't used lightly, Kuehl says.

In the largest rescue in Air Force history, a lieutenant colonel was plucked

from enemy territory in northern South Vietnam — some 30,000 enemy troops nearby. The United States lost one helicopter and its crew in the rescue.

In the Afghan war, U.S. soldiers snatched two American evangelicals from a Taliban prison.

In Somalia, Americans near a downed Black Hawk chopper passed up a chance to fight their way out. Instead they hunkered down until they could retrieve the pilot's body, caught in the wreckage.

In the Iraq war, U.S. forces at the edge of Baghdad are confronting greater numbers of civilians than they did in their push through the desert. Opportunities for violence and compassion are on the rise.

American snipers summoned help for an Iraqi woman in labor in a pickup truck.

British surgeons operated on a 12-year-old boy whose mother said he was among dozens of children shot by Iraqi hit squads near Basra.

An American officer assured Iraqi farmers that no more U.S. vehicles would trample through his farm — the perfect instance of how wars are won not only by attaining military victory but also winning over populations, Kuehl said.

"In this case, it's ensuring Iraqi populations understand the war is not to conquer them, but to free them," he said.

Baghdad raids raise risk of striking civilian sites

The Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS KITTY HAWK — With U.S. forces converging on Baghdad, Lt. Cmdr. John Enfield's job just got a lot harder.

The supersonic warplanes that had been bombing Iraqi forces on the outskirts of the city now are concentrating on central Baghdad.

And Enfield — an F/A-18 Hornet pilot — said it's become more difficult to avoid hitting civilian targets.

Pilots also said the sky over Baghdad has become so congested with coalition planes that they worry more about

in-flight collisions than Iraqi anti-aircraft fire.

Controllers are "stacking" aircraft at different altitudes to reduce the risk of collisions, but pilots say they still have to dodge each other.

Warplanes are pounding Baghdad with laser-guided bombs, targeting tanks, artillery and Republican Guard buildings. On Friday and Saturday, the pilots said, anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missile fire was the heaviest since the start of the war March 20.

Hitting a road or canal is comparatively easy, Enfield said, but "when you are in the city, it takes very precise con-

trol, a lot more time and a lot more effort to make sure you are only going to hit your target and nothing else."

Pilots are using smaller bombs meaning some targets must be hit more than once. Pilots said they also are required to get visual confirmation of their target before dropping bombs.

Enfield said the risk of hitting unintended targets stopped him from dropping bombs during two missions Friday.

Since the war began, flight operations aboard the Kitty Hawk had lasted about 15 hours a day. On Friday the Kitty Hawk cut the hours of flight operations to about 12 hours a day.

6 injured at Oakland protest

BY MARTHA MENDOZA

The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Police opened fire with nonlethal bullets at an anti-war protest at the Port of Oakland Monday morning, injuring several longshoremen standing nearby.

Police were trying to clear protesters from an entrance to the docks when they opened fire and the longshoremen apparently were caught in the line of fire.

Six longshoremen were treated by paramedics and at least one was expected to be taken to a hospital. It was unclear if any of the protesters was injured.

"I was standing as far back as I could," said longshoreman Kevin Wilson. "It was very scary. All of that force wasn't necessary."

Last week, a San Francisco-based peace group, Direct Action to Stop the War, had announced that it would stage a series of protests Monday involving new acts of civil disobedience.

The Port of Oakland was among the targets, organizers had said, because at least one shipping company is handling war supplies.

Trent Willis, a business agent for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, said angrily that dockworkers were leaving the docks after the incident.

"They shot my guys. We're not going to work today," Willis said. "The cops had no reason to open up on them."

Police used nonlethal bullets, sandbags and concussion grenades to try to break up about 500 protesters, who split into groups in front of different terminals.

Oakland Police officer James Carroll said police set up a "skirmish line" and ordered the protesters to disperse.

"It escalated pretty quick," he said. "Usually you go to these protests, and you wait around for three to four hours. Today, all of a sudden, people were being taken into custody." He could not confirm that anyone was hit by the bullets.

Protests also took place at the federal building in San Francisco and at the Concord Naval Weapons Station. Seven people were arrested when they temporarily blocked an exit ramp off Interstate 280.

Report blames Army for death

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — Carelessness on the training range and substandard rescue equipment killed Spc. Jonathan C. Stehle.

Those are the main findings of an Army investigation into Stehle's death Nov. 8 during an exercise at the Grafenwöhr Training Area.

The tank gunner, assigned to the 1st Armored Division's Büdingen-based Troop B, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, drowned — contributed to by hypothermia — after the Abrams M1A1 tank he was driving slid into a large, water-filled hole, according to the investigation.

"It is more probable, and very likely if not definite," the hole was a fighting position dug by another unit during a previous training exercise, wrote investigating officer Maj. Wayne C. Cherry in his accident report.

Rather than reporting the hole, soldiers filled it with trash, concertina wire and pickets, according to testimony in the recently released accident investigation.

None of this was visible the morning of the accident.

The hole "looked like a little puddle, just a regular little puddle that looked like the rest of the puddles in the area," testified Staff Sgt. Aaron Johnson, who was tank commander that day.

It was "irresponsible" that such a hazard was ignored, Johnson added.

"I've been tanking for eight years, and ever since I've been a private, we've had to clear the battlefield," he said in accident report testimony. "We mark dug positions and call up an eight-digit grid. Then we have to fill in the training area."

"Everyone knows that." Once the tank was in the hole, emergency crews lacked sufficient rescue equipment to deal with the situation.

Rescuers were thwarted by pumps that could not remove water fast enough to keep it from submerging Stehle, trapped in his driver's compartment.

Vilseck and Grafenwöhr fire departments tried to pump water out.

"However, the pumps and on-hand equipment [were] not adequate ... to perform the tasks at hand," Cherry wrote in his finding. "Their equipment could not reduce the water level inside the tank, and could not pump water fast enough from the hole to allow Stehle's head to remain above water."

Near-freezing temperatures induced hypothermia, which rendered Stehle unable to breathe through an air hose as the cold water rose above his head, according to testimony.

As crews fought the rising water, underpowered rescue vehicles on hand couldn't pull out the Abrams, the Army's main battle tank.

Two M-88 recovery vehicles with a combined pulling force of 135 tons failed to pull Stehle's tank out of the hole.

"This shows both the significance of the force with which the tank was mired, and the fact that the M-88 recovery vehicle, designed and built to support the much lighter M-60 series tank, is substandard equipment for the present 68-ton M1A1 main battle tank," a 1-1 Cavalry officer testified in the report.

If a more powerful Hercules version of the M-88 would have been at Grafenwöhr, "there is little doubt that the outcome of this situation would have been much different," the officer said.

However, the Hercules is assigned only to U.S.-based armored units.

Following Stehle's death, 1st AD Commander Maj. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez ordered an incident investigation on Range 301 at Grafenwöhr.

All names, some conclusions and many accident details were censored from a version of the report — sworn testimony compiled under Article 15-6 of Army Regulations — that the Army released to Stars and Stripes.

However, with the assistance of Stehle's family and soldiers at the accident scene, Stars and Stripes was able to fill in some gaps.

The report finds overall that the Army has a number of problems to address including an institutional failure to communicate.

"Collectively speaking, we continue to allow our units to make the same training errors over and over again" by ignoring lessons learned by previous exercises, Cherry wrote.

Cherry made several recommendations, including:

- An effort by Army officials, along with the tank's manufacturer, General Dynamics Land Systems, to "trouble-shoot and update tank recovery methods," then distribute the improved techniques Army-wide.

- A detailed terrain analysis of the Grafenwöhr training area to create a map identifying potential hazards.

- Better policing of range hazards.

However, whether the Army has accepted the recommendations is unknown.

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Rebels fire missiles at U.S. troops

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — Suspected rebel fighters launched five rockets at military bases of the U.S.-led coalition fighting in Afghanistan, an Army spokesman said Monday. No soldiers were hurt.

Two rockets were fired Sunday evening at a base in the eastern town of Shkin, in Paktika province near the Pakistani border, Col. Roger King said. Two Marine Corps AV-8 Harrier jets were called in but did not fire any weapons.

Also Sunday, a suspected 107 mm rocket was fired at coalition forces in the eastern town of Gardez, King said. Two suspected rockets were launched near Chapman airfield in eastern Khost province Saturday night, he said.

It was not immediately clear who carried out the attacks, and no suspects were caught.

The U.S.-led multinational coalition is battling rebel fighters from the former Taliban regime, al-Qaida and their allies, including former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

There have been several rocket attacks and ambushes in recent weeks near Shkin, a key border crossing point from Pakistan. U.S. military officials believe rebel groups are launching incursions into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

Radicals reportedly attacked base

TOKYO — A group of Japanese leftist radicals has claimed responsibility for an attack last week on a U.S. military base near Tokyo, police said Monday.

In a letter to the Japanese media, the Revolutionary Workers Association claimed it had fired projectiles at Atsugi Naval Air Facility to protest against the U.S.-led war in Iraq, said Tsuneo Kosuge, a police spokesman.

Local residents alerted police after hearing two explosions late Thursday at the U.S. facility, located just south of Tokyo.

Investigators later found two metal cylinders, two tripods and a small metal projectile nearby, which are believed to have been used by the group, Kosuge said. No one was injured.

Leftist radicals in Japan use projectile launchers in attacks on targets related to the U.S. military, the Japanese military or the royal family.

Such attacks are usually symbolic, and injuries or damage are rare.

Last month, another group, The Revolutionary Army, claimed responsibility for similar attacks at Japan's Defense Agency building in Tokyo and a separate U.S. military base.

No injuries or damage were reported in those incidents either.

About 50,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Japan under a mutual security pact.

Although the Japanese government supports the war in Iraq, public opposition has been intensifying in recent weeks, with media polls showing a strong majority of Japanese are against the military attack.

Soldier's death investigated

U.S. military police are investigating the death of a 1st Armored Division soldier at Armstrong Barracks in Büdingen, Germany.

Members of his unit — Troop A, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment — found the soldier in his barracks Friday at 6:54 a.m., according to Master Sgt. David Melancon, a 1st AD spokesman.

The Army is not releasing any information on the circumstances of the death or the dead soldier's name until notification of next of kin, Melancon said.

Rivera says he's sorry

NEW YORK — Geraldo Rivera says he's sorry for breaking the military's rules for journalists by outlining planned troop movements in the sand.

The Fox News Channel correspondent, now in Ku-

wait, delivered his apology on the air Sunday night. He said a review of his report while traveling with the 101st Airborne Division last week "showed that I did indeed break one of the rules related to embedment."

The Pentagon asked that Rivera be taken out of Iraq after his report.

"I'm sorry that it happened and I assure you that it was inadvertent," Rivera said. "Nobody was hurt by what I said. No mission was compromised."

Taiwan welcomes Arnett

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Fired NBC correspondent Peter Arnett began reporting from Iraq on Monday as a special Baghdad correspondent for Taiwan's TVBS cable news.

Arnett appeared live for about 30 minutes on TVBS's evening newscast, taking questions about the war from Taiwanese anchors. Arnett's answers were simultaneously translated into Mandarin.

American-owned NBC axed Arnett on March 31 after he gave an unauthorized interview with state-run Iraqi TV.

Polish journalists taken

WARSAW, Poland — Armed Iraqis abducted two Polish reporters at a checkpoint some 80 miles south of Baghdad on Monday, their editors said.

Marcin Firlej, 27, a reporter for the private TVN24 news channel, and 31-year-old Jacek Kaczmarek, with Polish state radio, had set off from the town of Nasiriyah with a larger group of journalists, TVN24 editor Malgorzata Laszcz said.

They were stopped at a checkpoint near Hillah.

Marek Lipinski, a spokesman for Polish state radio, confirmed that Kaczmarek — who was based in Kuwait but reporting in Iraq — was stopped with Firlej.

Both men carried accreditations issued by the U.S. military.

From wire and staff reports

Huskies, Vols ready to mix it up again

BY CHUCK SCHOFFNER

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — So Connecticut was too young to do this again, huh? Too many players missing from last season's unbeaten national championship team, right?

Ha!
Connecticut is back in the title game again and look who the Huskies are playing on Tuesday night: None other than those dreaded Tennessee Lady Vols, their bitter rivals for supremacy in women's basketball.

The third championship game between the two was set up when both earned tough semifinal victories Sunday night. Connecticut came from nine points down in the second half to beat Texas 71-69 and Tennessee pulled away late to defeat Duke 66-56.

"Regardless of how it plays out, I think it's going to be a heck of a game," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. "I know that's the game everyone's been waiting for and now that it's here, let's enjoy it."

Well, not everyone.
"It's probably not the best thing for the sport because it's expected," Texas coach Jody Conradt said. "I think the more suspense you have in a sport, the more interest it draws."

Like it or not, the season will end with either Connecticut (36-1) or Tennessee (33-4) adding to its title collection.

Tennessee has won six championships but its last was in 1998.

Connecticut is going for its third title in four years and fourth overall.

UConn beat Tennessee in the 1995 and 2000 championship games and defeated the Lady Vols in the national semifinals last year before topping off a 39-0 season with a win over Oklahoma.

Four starters from that team graduated and Auriemma's lineup now includes two freshmen and a sophomore. Another freshman is a key reserve.

But he also has Diana Taurasi, an incomparable talent around which to build a team. Taurasi scored 26 points against Texas, including a long three-pointer to put the Huskies ahead to stay with 2:07 left.

"She's just one of those special people that God blessed with an incredible amount of self confidence and talent," Auriemma said. "The biggest thing that you can say about her is that she's not afraid. She wants the ball in crucial situations."

Tennessee avenged one of its losses by beating Duke and now has a chance to make amends for another. The Lady Vols lost to UConn 63-62 in overtime on Jan. 4. They have won 24 of 25 since then.

"I think the level of confidence is so much different from last year," Tennessee's Tasha Butts said. "Last year we got here and didn't know what to expect. But now we're back and we know what to expect."

A championship maybe?

Tennessee started its march to the title game after a humbling 78-62 loss to LSU in the Southeastern Conference tournament final.

The Lady Vols had almost two weeks between that game and the start of the NCAA tournament and, as usual, coach Pat Summitt had them ready.

Playing the first four rounds at home, Tennessee breezed to its 14th Final Four by an average margin of

23.6 points. Then, against Duke, the Lady Vols used their defense and rebounding to hold on until Gwen Jackson closed with a tremendous performance down the stretch.

Jackson scored 25 points and finished with 15 rebounds.

The Lady Vols also showed off their depth. Loree Moore, not usually a big scorer, came up with 11 points. Brittany Jackson scored seven off the bench, getting three key baskets in the second half.

So it'll be Tennessee's depth and experience vs. the exuberance of Connecticut's youth and brilliance of Taurasi — definitely a game worth watching.

Taurasi put Connecticut back in the national championship game with her offense down the stretch and her defense on the final play.

The Huskies closed the game with an 11-3 run to dispatch the Longhorns (29-6), who were in the Final Four for the first time since 1987.

Taurasi made the key defensive play, knocking the ball away from Alisha Sare as the Texas player attempted to go up for a jumper just before the buzzer.

Tennessee 66, Duke 56

Gwen Jackson scored 13 of her 25 points in the final 6:08 and Brittany Jackson added a key basket in that stretch as Tennessee won a defensive matchup.

Duke (35-2), which had won 15 straight, was denied a second trip to the finals despite 29 points from All-American Alana Beard, who went past 2,000 points for her career.

From The Associated Press

BASKETBALL

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Detroit Pistons forward Ben Wallace went down with a sprained knee ligament late in the first half against San Antonio on Sunday.

He had to be helped off the court by the team's trainer and strength coach, and the team said Wallace had sprained his left medial collateral ligament.

Wallace was to undergo an MRI exam Monday, which will help determine whether he will be able to play again this season.

MARATHON

PARIS — Mike Rotich set a course record Sunday and won the Paris Marathon, a race in which seven Kenyans finished among the top 10.

Beatrice Omwanza gave Kenya another victory by winning the women's division on a chilly day. She was 4 seconds ahead of Italy's Rosaria Console.

Rotich held off France's Benoit Zwi-erzchlewski and finished in 2 hours, 6 minutes, 33 seconds. He broke the mark of 2:08:10 set by countryman Julius Ruto in 1999.

GOLF

LOS ANGELES — Annika Sorenstam shot a 1-under-par 71 in the final round Sunday to win the Office Depot Championship by four strokes. Defending champion Se Ri Pak, Pat Hurst and Heather Bowie finished tied for second. Pak shot 71, while Hurst had a 72 and Bowie a 73.

DULUTH, Ga. — Ben Crane made an

Sports in brief

eagle on the last hole to beat Bob Tway by four shots for his first victory in 40 events on tour.

Crane's eagle at the 18th punctuated a 29 on the back nine, and his 63 tied the course record. His 127 total in the last two rounds is the lowest on tour this season.

NAKHON PATHOM, Thailand — Edward Loar of Dallas became the first left-hander to win on the Asian PGA Tour, capturing the Thailand Open by five strokes Sunday for his first pro victory.

Australia's Jason Dawes, the runner-up, finished with a 71.

TENNIS

Switzerland reached the Davis Cup semifinals for just the second time, eliminating France on Sunday behind Roger Federer's 6-1, 6-0, 6-2 victory over substitute Fabrice Santoro.

The Swiss will play at Australia on Sept. 19-21. In the other semifinal, Spain hosts Argentina.

AUTO RACING

TALLADEGA, Ala. — The record book will only show that Dale Earnhardt Jr. won four straight races at Talladega Superspeedway.

Some of his rivals wonder if the feat deserves an asterisk.

Earnhardt used a controversial pass to take the lead in the Aaron's 499 on Sunday, driving below the yellow line at Talladega with four laps to go as his Chevrolet went ahead of Matt Kenseth.

NASCAR didn't penalize him — as it has done with several other drivers since implementing the rule in July 2001 — and Earnhardt went on to his record fourth consecutive win at Talladega.

"He was clearly below the yellow line," said Jimmie Johnson, who was behind Earnhardt and Kenseth. "Anybody else who dances down there gets in trouble. From my vantage point, I didn't think it was a legal pass."

With a huge grin on his face and still wearing his beer-soaked firesuit, Earnhardt dismissed any suggestion of preferential treatment while savoring his latest taming of Talladega.

"This is definitely the sweetest, regardless of the controversy of going below the line or whatever," he said.

Ryan Newman got another wild ride at a restrictor-plate race, blowing a tire that knocked half the field out of Sunday's race at Talladega Superspeedway.

Newman blew his left rear tire on the third lap of the Aaron's 499, triggering a massive 27-car accident that had driver after driver criticizing what's become a routine in restrictor plate races.

SAO PAULO, Brazil — Kimi Raikkonen of Finland won a shortened Brazilian Grand Prix on Sunday after the race on a rain-drenched track was stopped because of spinouts and crashes.

The race was halted during the 55th of 71 scheduled laps, with Italy's Giancarlo Fisichella in front. But officials declared the race over with a red flag at the end of the 54th lap, when Raikkonen was first.

Earlier, five-time Formula One champion Michael Schumacher was knocked out of the running when his car spun off the Interlagos course. Also spinning out in a wet corner were Juan Pablo Montoya, Antonio Pizzonia, Jensen Button and Justin Wilson.

HOCKEY

DENVER — The St. Louis Blues on Sunday signed free agent left wing Peter Sejna, the NCAA's leading scorer this season.

Sejna played in the team's season finale later Sunday and scored a power-play goal. He lifted a shot over Colorado Avalanche goalie Patrick Roy with 12 seconds left in the second period.

SWIMMING

INDIANAPOLIS — Michael Phelps was unbeatable Sunday, giving the United States an easy victory in a rare dual meet against Australia.

The 17-year-old, baby-faced swimmer set a world record in the 400-meter individual medley, an American record in the 100 butterfly and was a member of the 400 medley relay team that came within .76 seconds of setting a new world mark, as the Americans coasted to a 196-74 victory.

If there was a caveat to the victory, it was the absence of Australian swimming star Ian Thorpe, who holds the freestyle world records in the 200, 400 and 800 meters, pulled out of the meet last week because of a meningitis-type virus that was first discovered in February.

From The Associated Press

New sea odyssey

His experiences on a make-believe space trip helped prepare Bill Paxton for a real voyage to the bottom of the sea.

Paxton accompanied longtime friend and collaborator James Cameron on dives to the wreck of the Titanic in summer 2001.

In his first theatrical release since 1997's "Titanic," Cameron chronicles their journey in the documentary "Ghosts of the Abyss."

Paxton's work on Ron Howard's dramatization "Apollo 13," about the ill-fated moon expedition, proved good training for his 2½-mile dives aboard Cameron's mini-sub.

"You deal with the same kind of mindset. A very tight command module, a three-man team. Every-

Faces 'n' places

body has to be doing something and working together all the time," Paxton said.

Opening made his day

Clint Eastwood was the guest of honor Friday evening in Silver Spring, Md., at the opening of the American Film Institute Silver Theatre and Cultural Center, a refurbished 1938 Art Moderne movie palace that local officials hope will become the centerpiece of a re-energized business district in the Washington suburbs.

"This theater is a work of art. I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to come here and see this restoration," said Eastwood.

Picking a fight

Joe Frazier's lawyer said he will appeal a federal judge's ruling that the former heavyweight champion cannot sue the Oneida Indian Nation over the unauthorized use of his photograph in a fight promotion.

U.S. District Judge Frederick Scullin concluded that the upstate New York Indian tribe was immune from the lawsuit because of its sovereign status.

"The judge certainly provided analysis for his decision, ... but I think it also gives us some opportunities for appeal," H. Todd Bullard, Frazier's lawyer, said.

From The Associated Press

Wizards 99, Celtics 98 (OT)

BOSTON — Michael Jordan had 25 points and 13 rebounds as he said goodbye to Boston, and Washington kept its playoff hopes alive with a 99-98 overtime victory over the Celtics.

Christian Laettner had 13 rebounds and 16 points, including the game-winning jumper from the left side with 53 seconds left. Jerry Stackhouse scored 24 for Washington, which is two games behind Milwaukee for the eighth spot in the Eastern Conference playoff race with six games to play.

If the Wizards can't catch the Bucks, those could be the last games of Jordan's career.

Paul Pierce had 36 points and nine rebounds for Boston, which could have clinched a playoff berth with a victory. Walter McCarty scored 23, but Antoine Walker had just seven points — two in regulation — to go with his 14 assists and 10 rebounds.

Nets 96, Raptors 87

TORONTO — Kenyon Martin had 24 points and 10 rebounds as New Jersey beat Toronto.

Martin scored six of New Jersey's last eight points in his return after missing three games with a sprained right knee.

Richard Jefferson had 16 points and Lucious Harris added 15 in his first game back after missing three games with a sprained left ankle.

Vince Carter had a team-high 28 points for the lottery-bound Raptors.

NBA

Carter left the game with 31 seconds left with what appeared to be a sprained left ankle.

Kings 97, 76ers 81

PHILADELPHIA — Sacramento finished 5-1 on a six-game Eastern road trip as Chris Webber had 21 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists in a victory over Philadelphia.

Peja Stojakovic added 21 points for Sacramento, which has won four straight and 10 of 11.

The Kings, who lost at Detroit in the second game of their trip, are two games behind Dallas for the No. 1 spot in the Western Conference. They will play of their remaining four games at home, where their 32-6 record is the league's best.

Allen Iverson, playing despite left knee bursitis, had 24 points, seven rebounds and six assists for Philadelphia. He sat out the final 6:01 after the Sixers fell behind by 18.

Pacers 90, Heat 69

INDIANAPOLIS — Jonathan Bender scored 15 points and Ron Artest kept himself under control in adding 13 as Indiana beat Miami to win for the fifth time in six games and move into third place in the Eastern Conference.

Continuing their recovery from a post All-Star break slump, the Pacers closed the third quarter with a 15-0 run and had their best defensive effort of the season.

Bender scored nine of his points in the second quarter, helping the Pacers to a 44-37 lead at the half. The Pacers broke the game open in the third, ending the quarter on a 27-4 run, including the final 15 points.

Mike James led the Heat with 19 points.

Spurs 89, Pistons 83

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Tim Duncan had 25 points and 21 rebounds as San Antonio beat Detroit to extend the league's longest current winning streak to nine games.

Detroit's Ben Wallace went down with a sprained medial collateral ligament in his left knee late in the first half when teammate Tayshaun Prince fell into him. The All-Star, who leads the league in rebounds and blocks, will undergo an MRI exam Monday to help determine if he'll play again this season.

Detroit lost its third in a row and dropped a half-game behind New Jersey for the best record in the Eastern Conference.

The victory pulled the Spurs within a half-game of Dallas for the best record in the Western Conference.

Warriors 106, Nuggets 99

OAKLAND, Calif. — Antawn Jamison scored a season-high 41 points and grabbed 14 rebounds as Golden State beat Denver to snap a three-game losing streak.

Juwan Howard scored 24 points for the Nuggets, who lost their seventh straight road game and third straight overall. Shammond Williams added 14 points.

The Warriors won all four games against Denver this season, their first series sweep over the Nuggets since 1991-92.

Rockets 114, Magic 93

HOUSTON — Cuttino Mobley scored 23 points and Steve Francis had 21 as Houston defeated Orlando to give absentee coach Rudy Tomjanovich his 500th career victory.

Tomjanovich is on a leave of absence while undergoing treatment for bladder cancer. Assistant coach Larry Smith is directing the team for Tomjanovich, whose career record now is 500-495.

Orlando lost its fourth in a row despite a game-high 28 points for Tracy McGrady. He scored 24 points in the first half and sat out the fourth quarter.

SuperSonics 82, Jazz 80

SEATTLE — Rashard Lewis scored 12 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and hit a key three-pointer as Seattle maintained its playoff hopes with a victory over Utah.

Ray Allen scored 18 and Peja Drobniak had 17 as the Sonics won their fourth straight home game despite shooting 38.8 percent.

Continued on Page 8

White Sox 10, Tigers 2

CHICAGO — Detroit became the first team in 40 years to start 0-6 in consecutive seasons, giving up nine runs in the eighth inning of a 10-2 loss to Chicago on Sunday.

Magglio Ordonez's three-run homer capped Chicago's rally. The New York Mets were the last club to lose its first six games in two straight seasons, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, baseball's statistician. They did it in 1962-63, their first two seasons.

Detroit began 0-11 last year and finished 55-106, tying Tampa Bay for the worst record in the majors. Rookie manager Alan Trammell is still looking for his first victory.

Miguel Olivo drew a bases-loaded walk to push across the go-ahead run in the eighth. D'Angelo Jimenez had a two-run double and Josh Paul added a two-run single.

Damaso Marte (1-0) got four outs for the victory. Franklyn German (0-1) took the loss.

Reds 5, Cubs 4

CINCINNATI — Sean Casey's tiebreaking solo homer off Mark Guthrie (0-1) in the eighth inning sent Cincinnati to a 5-4 victory Sunday over Chicago, completing a discouraging first homestand in their new ballpark.

The Reds' clubhouse was still subdued before the game, the aftermath of Ken Griffey Jr.'s severe shoulder injury. The center fielder dislocated his right shoulder while diving for a ball in the Cubs' 9-7 victory on Saturday.

Tests found no fracture or damage to the rotator cuff. A team doctor said Sunday that Griffey will try to rehabilitate without surgery and could be back in six-to-10 weeks.

Gabe White (1-0) got the victory and Scott Williamson pitched the ninth for the save.

Braves 13, Marlins 4

ATLANTA — Chipper Jones had a two-run single and Andruw Jones followed with a two-run double in the first inning as Atlanta bounced back from its most lopsided loss in three seasons to beat Florida.

After Braves ace Greg Maddux was pounded for three homers and nine runs in only two innings of a 17-1 loss Saturday night, the Braves responded quickly against Florida starter Brad Penny (0-1).

American League

Yankees 10, Devil Rays 5

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Roger Clemens won his 295th game and Alfonso Soriano and Nick Johnson hit consecutive homers in the first inning for New York.

Clemens (2-0) allowed four runs and six hits in seven innings.

After limiting Tampa Bay to a run and three hits through six, the six-time Cy Young winner gave up a three-run homer to Javier Valentin in the seventh.

Bernie Williams also homered for the Yankees, who concluded a season-opening road trip 5-1. New York has outscored its opposition 15-2.

Soriano and Johnson started the game with back-to-back homers off Victor Zambrano (0-1) — the third time in team history the feat has been accomplished.

Red Sox 12, Orioles 2

BALTIMORE — Shea Hillenbrand homered, doubled twice and had a career-high six RBIs as Boston beat nemesis Rodrigo Lopez.

Nomar Garciaparra homered, scored four runs and fell a single short of the cycle. Bidding to become the 20th Boston player to hit for the cycle, Garciaparra flied out in the eighth.

Hillenbrand has 15 RBIs in seven games. Manny Ramirez drove in two runs and extended his hitting streak to 20 games, matching a career best.

Knuckleballer Tim Lincecum (1-0) allowed two runs and four hits in six innings.

The Red Sox scored eight runs against Lopez (0-1), who went 4-0 with

a 2.48 ERA against Boston as a rookie last year.

Blue Jays 8, Twins 1

MINNEAPOLIS — Carlos Delgado homered and drove in four runs, and Cory Lidle (1-1) pitched seven strong innings as Toronto completed a three-game sweep.

Brad Radke (1-1) was hit hard, giving up eight runs on 10 hits in three-plus innings. The eight earned runs tied Radke's career high, set four times previously.

The Blue Jays swept a three-game series at the Metrodome for the first time since 1993, the second of their consecutive World Series championship seasons. The Twins, 101-61 at home the past two years, were swept in Minnesota for just the third time since the beginning of the 2001 season.

Continued on Page 8

National League

Rafael Furcal went 4-for-5, scored two runs and drove in another and Andruw Jones went 3-for-5 with a homer and four RBIs. Robert Fick and Gary Sheffield also homered to back Horacio Ramirez (1-1).

Pirates 2, Phillies 0

PHILADELPHIA — Kris Benson pitched seven shutout innings and scored a run as Pittsburgh beat Philadelphia.

Benson (2-0), who allowed one unearned run in 6 2/3 innings in a season-opening victory against Cincinnati, gave up six hits and a walk. He struck out six.

Mike Williams pitched the ninth for his third save for the Pirates, who are off to a 5-1 start for the second straight year.

Expos 8, Mets 5

NEW YORK — Jeff Liefier hit a three-run homer off Armando Benitez in the ninth inning, giving Montreal the victory.

Benitez (0-1) entered with a 5-4 lead provided by Tony Clark, who hit a go-ahead, two-run shot in the sixth inning in his Mets debut.

Scott Stewart (1-0) pitched one hitless inning for the victory, and Rocky Biddle got three outs for his second save.

Giants 5, Brewers 0

MILWAUKEE — Kirk Rueter (1-0) pitched six scoreless innings and San Francisco remained unbeaten despite resting half its starters.

Giants manager Felipe Alou held Barry Bonds, Ray Durham, Benito Santiago and J.T. Snow out of the starting lineup, but the makeshift team that played was good enough to defeat the Brewers, who are 0-6 for the first time in franchise history.

Rich Aurilia hit a solo homer off Wayne Franklin (0-1) for the Giants.

Rockies 8, Diamondbacks 3

DENVER — Todd Helton hit a three-run homer off Curt Schilling and Colorado beat Arizona for its fourth straight victory.

Helton's homer highlighted a four-run first inning against Schilling (0-1). He and teammate Randy Johnson are a combined 0-2 after two starts apiece this season.

The two-time defending NL West champions have lost four straight and are 1-5, equaling the worst start in their six-year history.

The Diamondbacks also opened 1-5 in their inaugural season of 1998.

Colorado's Jason Jennings (1-1), last season's NL Rookie of the Year, went five-plus innings, allowing six hits and three runs.

Dodgers 4, Padres 3 (13)

SAN DIEGO — Brian Jordan's bases-loaded grounder drove in the go-ahead run in the top of the 13th inning and Los Angeles beat San Diego to avoid a four-game sweep.

With one out, Jordan hit a slow roller to third base. Sean Burroughs charged and fielded the ball, but couldn't get it out of his glove cleanly and decided to throw out Jordan at first rather than try for a close play with Mike Kinkade at the plate.

Kinkade beat out an infield single off Jarret Wright (0-1) with one out when Burroughs couldn't dig the ball out of his glove after making a diving stop. Cesar Izturis beat out a bunt down the third base line and Shawn Green walked to load the bases and bring up Jordan.

Guillermo Mota (1-0) pitched two innings for the victory.

From The Associated Press

NBA continued

Continued from Page 7

Karl Malone, held scoreless for the first time in his 18-year career during his last visit to Seattle on Nov. 3, led Utah with 22 points. But for the second straight game, the Jazz were denied a chance to clinch a playoff berth for the 20th straight season.

The victory moved Seattle (38-38) to .500 for the first time since Jan. 3. The Sonics have won five of their past six and nine of 12.

Timberwolves 97, Trail Blazers 78

PORTLAND, Ore. — Kevin Garnett had 16 points, 14 rebounds and 12 assists as Minnesota closed in on Portland for fourth place in the West.

The Timberwolves won the season series 3-1 and pulled virtually even with Portland for home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs. The Blazers (47-29) still lead Minnesota (48-30) by .003 percentage points.

The Timberwolves briefly surrendered the lead in the third quarter but went on a 10-2 run midway through the fourth to go up 81-71. Wally Szczerbiak had 25 points for Minnesota, which had lost four of its previous five.

Lakers 115, Suns 113 (OT)

LOS ANGELES — Kobe Bryant's jump shot in the final 28.6 seconds clinched a playoff spot for the Lakers and moved them within 1½ games of fourth place in the Western Conference.

Bryant, whose jump shot at time expired Friday night gave the Lakers a 102-101 victory at Memphis, made the final shot of regulation Sunday — a baseline jumper that tied the game with 14.3 seconds left.

In overtime, Shawn Marion misfired on a three-pointer with six seconds remaining, and Bryant dribbled out the last few seconds as the Suns tried to commit a foul.

Bryant had 26 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers (46-31), who have won four straight and seven of eight.

Shaquille O'Neal added 22 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists.

From The Associated Press

Scores/standings

American League

East Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
New York	5	1	.833	—
Boston	5	2	.714	½
Toronto	3	3	.500	2
Baltimore	2	4	.333	3
Tampa Bay	2	5	.286	3½

Central Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
Kansas City	5	0	1.000	—
Chicago	3	3	.500	2½
Minnesota	3	3	.500	2½
Cleveland	2	3	.400	3
Detroit	0	6	.000	5½

West Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
Oakland	5	1	.833	—
Seattle	3	3	.500	2
Anaheim	2	4	.333	3
Texas	2	4	.333	3

Sunday's games

N.Y. Yankees 10, Tampa Bay 5
Boston 12, Baltimore 2
Toronto 8, Minnesota 1
Cleveland at Kansas City, ppd., rain
Chicago White Sox 10, Detroit 2
Seattle 11, Texas 2
Oakland 7, Anaheim 6

National League

East Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
Montreal	4	2	.667	—
New York	3	3	.500	1
Philadelphia	3	3	.500	1
Atlanta	2	4	.333	2
Florida	2	4	.333	2

Central Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
Pittsburgh	5	1	.833	—
Houston	4	1	.800	½
St. Louis	3	2	.600	1½
Chicago	3	3	.500	2
Cincinnati	2	4	.333	3
Milwaukee	0	6	.000	5

West Division				GB
W	L	Pct		
San Francisco	6	0	1.000	—
Colorado	4	2	.667	2
Los Angeles	3	4	.429	3½
San Diego	3	4	.429	3½
Arizona	1	5	.167	5

Sunday's games

Atlanta 13, Florida 4
Montreal 8, N.Y. Mets 5
Cincinnati 5, Chicago Cubs 4
Pittsburgh 2, Philadelphia 0
San Francisco 5, Milwaukee 0

Houston at St. Louis, ppd
Colorado 8, Arizona 3
Los Angeles 4, San Diego 3, 13 innings

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division							
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-New Jersey	46	20	10	6	108	216	166
x-Philadelphia	45	20	13	4	107	211	166
x-N.Y. Islanders	35	34	11	2	83	224	231
N.Y. Rangers	32	36	10	4	78	210	231
Pittsburgh	27	44	6	5	65	189	255

	Northeast Division						
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
z-Ottawa	52	21	8	1	113	263	182
x-Toronto	44	28	7	3	98	236	208
x-Boston	36	31	11	4	87	245	237
Montreal	30	35	8	9	77	206	234
Buffalo	27	37	10	8	72	190	219

Southeast Division							
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Tampa Bay	36	25	16	5	93	219	210
x-Washington	39	29	8	6	92	224	220
Atlanta	31	39	7	5	74	226	284
Florida	24	36	13	9	70	176	237
Carolina	22	43	11	6	61	171	240

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	Central Division						
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
y-Detroit	48	20	10	4	110	269	203
x-St. Louis	41	24	11	6	99	253	222
Chicago	30	33	13	6	79	207	226
Nashville	27	35	13	7	74	183	206
Columbus	29	42	8	3	69	213	263

Northwest Division							
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
x-Colorado	42	19	13	8	105	251	194
x-Vancouver	45	23	13	1	104	264	208
x-Minnesota	42	29	10	1	95	198	178
x-Edmonton	36	26	11	9	92	231	230
Calgary	29	36	13	4	75	186	228

Pacific Division							
	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
z-Dallas	46	17	15	4	111	245	169
x-Anaheim	40	27	9	6	95	203	193
Los Angeles	33	37	6	6	78	203	221
Phoenix	31	35	11	5	78	204	230
San Jose	28	37	9	8	73	214	239

Two points for a win, one point for a tie and overtime loss.

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division
z-clinched conference

Sunday's games

New Jersey 2, Buffalo 2, tie
Minnesota 4, Columbus 3
Chicago 4, Detroit 3, OT
Colorado 5, St. Louis 2
Atlanta 6, Tampa Bay 2

Dallas 2, Nashville 0
N.Y. Islanders 2, Carolina 1
Philadelphia 6, Florida 2
Phoenix 3, San Jose 3, tie
Los Angeles 2, Vancouver 0
End of Regular Season

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division				Pct	GB
W	L				
x-New Jersey	48	29	.618	—	
x-Philadelphia	45	31	.592	2½	
Boston	41	36	.532	7	
Orlando	39	38	.506	9	
Washington	35	41	.461	12½	
New York	34	43	.442	14	
Miami	23	55	.295	25½	

Central Division				Pct	GB
W	L				
x-Detroit	47	29	.618	—	
x-Indiana	46	31	.597	1½	
x-New Orleans	42	35	.545	5½	
Milwaukee	38	40	.487	10	
Atlanta	31	45	.408	16	
Chicago	27	50	.351	20½	
Toronto	24	52	.316	23	
Cleveland	15	61	.197	32	

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division				Pct	GB
W	L				
x-Dallas	57	19	.750	—	
x-San Antonio	57	20	.740	½	
x-Minnesota	48	30	.615	10	
Utah	45	32	.584	12½	
Houston	40	37	.519	17½	
Memphis	26	51	.338	31½	
Denver	17	60	.221	40½	

Pacific Division				Pct	GB
W	L				
y-Sacramento	56	22	.718	—	
x-Portland	47	29	.618	8	
x-L.A. Lakers	46	31	.597	9½	
Phoenix	40	36	.526	15	
Seattle	38	38	.500	17	
Golden State	37	40	.481	18½	
L.A. Clippers	24	52	.316	31	

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division
Sunday's games
Washington 99, Boston 98, OT
New Jersey 96, Toronto 87
Sacramento 97, Philadelphia 81
Indiana 90, Miami 69
San Antonio 89, Detroit 83
Golden State 106, Denver 99
Houston 114, Orlando 93
Seattle 82, Utah 80
Minnesota 97, Portland 78
L.A. Lakers 115, Phoenix 113, OT

From The Associated Press

Turco drops goals-against to new low

The Associated Press

Marty Turco risked his goals-against average just by playing on the final day of the regular season. Things worked out perfectly for the star goalie and his Dallas teammates.

Turco dropped his GAA to 1.72 — the lowest in the NHL's modern era — in Dallas' 2-0 home victory over Nashville on Sunday. And coupled with Detroit's 4-3 overtime loss at Chicago, the Stars earned the top seed in the Western Conference playoffs.

"This has certainly been a magical year, for the team and for myself," Turco said.

Turco, who made 21 saves for his seventh shutout of the season, came in with a 1.75 GAA, already better than the record of 1.77 set by Chicago's Tony Esposito in 1971-72.

All was well for the Colorado Avalanche, too, who put a damper on Vancouver's regular-season finale.

Milan Hejduk scored his league-best 50th goal and teammate Peter Forsberg used a three-point rally to capture the Art Ross Trophy as the top scorer.

It all added up to a Northwest Division title for the Avalanche, who won 25 of their last 37 games to capture their NHL-record ninth straight division crown. That snapped a tie with Montreal, which won eight straight from 1975 to '82.

The day started so well for the Canucks and their top point-getter, Markus Naslund. The forward entered with 48 goals, one behind Hejduk — and 104 points, one more than Forsberg.

Most important, the Canucks were one point ahead of the Avalanche and needed just one point to win their division for the first time in a decade. Instead, Naslund had his first pointless game in eight contests, the Canucks lost 2-0 to Los Angeles, and the Avalanche beat St. Louis 5-2 to take the Northwest.

Instead of a first-round matchup against Minnesota, the Canucks will take on the experienced Blues. Colorado will play postseason-newcomer Minnesota.

Forsberg, with a goal and two assists Sunday, finished with 29 goals and 77 assists to become the first Swedish-born player to win the Art Ross. Forsberg had the most assists in the NHL since Jaromir Jagr had 83 for Pittsburgh in 1998-99.

The Stars will play eighth-seeded Edmonton for the sixth time in seven years, while Stanley Cup champion Detroit earned the No. 2 seed as the Central champs and will play Anaheim.

In the East, Ottawa had Sunday off, but the Senators already knew their first-round opponent would be the New York Islanders.

Ottawa, with a league-high 113 points, is the fifth different Presidents' Trophy winner in five years. Detroit and Colorado, the previous two winners, also captured the Stanley Cup.

The Islanders closed with a 2-1 win over Carolina, which went from Eastern Conference champion to the NHL's worst team.

New Jersey edged Philadelphia in the Atlantic Division to earn the No. 2 seed in the East and a first-round matchup with Boston.

Philadelphia will play Toronto.

The Devils and Flyers tied for the fewest goals allowed with 166. So they will share the Jennings Trophy, which goes to goalies who played at least 25 games for the team with the fewest goals against.

Martin Brodeur played 73 games for the Devils, and Roman Cechmanek was in Philadelphia's net 58 times, with backup Robert Esche playing 30.

In a series pitting the top two teams in the Southeast Division, Tampa Bay — a first-time division winner — will face Washington. The Lightning finished with 93 points to edge Washington by one.

American League continued

Continued from Page 7

The Twins have scored only 20 runs in six games.

Mariners 11, Rangers 2

ARLINGTON, Texas — Edgar Martinez homered and Dan Wilson, just off the disabled list, hit an RBI single on the first pitch he saw this season as Seattle jumped on Chan Ho Park early.

The Mariners scored in each of the first three innings and led 4-0 when Park (0-2) was pulled after Ichiro Suzuki's leadoff single in the fourth. Park has pitched just 5⅓ innings in his two starts, allowing 10 runs and 11 hits.

Freddy Garcia (1-1) bounced back from his poor first start, allowing just two runs and three hits in 6⅓ innings despite six walks.

Athletics 7, Angels 6

OAKLAND, Calif. — Mark Ellis had a career-high four hits as Oakland beat Anaheim to complete a three-game sweep of the World Series champions.

Chris Singleton's RBI single off heralded rookie Francisco Rodriguez (0-1) gave the Athletics a 6-5 lead in the seventh inning, and Ellis' sacrifice fly provided an insurance run. He finished with two doubles, two RBIs and a run scored.

Oakland's 5-1 start is its best since winning five straight to start the 1992 season.

The 21-year-old Rodriguez, a postseason star in October, gave up three runs and one hit in one inning.

Chad Bradford (1-0) got four straight outs for the victory. Keith Foulke worked the ninth for his second save, allowing a solo homer by Tim Salmon.

Brad Fuller drove in three runs for Anaheim.

From The Associated Press